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LINGALA

Grammar and Dictionary

Prof Malcolm Guthrie
Dr John F Carrington

English – Lingala

Lingala – English

BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY
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We offer here tribute and thanks to John F Carrington, BSc, PhD, revered missionary, teacher and linguist in Zaire from 1938 to 1977, who completed this revision before his sudden death in 1986.

We are also grateful to Winifred Hadden and Susan Evans, who have diligently read and corrected the proofs.

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INTRODUCTION / GRAMMAR

In 1931, missionaries of the Congo Protestant Council called a conference in Kinshasa to gather together "all the known work on Lingala Grammar and Vocabulary", using Frank Longland's revision (1914) of W.H. Stapleton's pioneer publication: "Suggestions for a grammar of Bangala" (Bolobo 1903). Professor (then Rev.) Malcolm Guthrie of the Kinshasa BMS Mission was invited to rearrange and edit the linguistic findings of this Conference and his "Lingala Grammar and Dictionary" appeared with the authorization of the C.P.C. in 1935. Four years later, he published a French edition with the title: "Grammaire et Dictionnaire de Lingala" in which he not only radically revised the vocabulary but also introduced the 7-vowel system of notation as well as describing the tonal structure of the language and indicating tonal melodies of all lexical and grammatical elements.

In 1939, the author of the "Grammaire et Dictionnaire" modestly claimed that Lingala was well known on both banks of the river between Kinshasa and a point about 200 km to the West of Kisangani as well as inland "to a certain distance" on both sides. Today, it is probably known by more inhabitants of Zaïre than any other language in the country and its usage has crossed the borders of the Republic into Angola and the Republic of Congo. Because of the popularity of Lingala music, the language has acquired prestige all over the western part of Africa and even further afield.

Professor Guthrie was anxious to publish a revision of his "Grammaire et Dictionnaire" and to supplement this there was to be a teaching manual for Lingala. When he visited Zaïre in 1970 as visiting-lecturer at the University (Kisangani Campus) under the auspices of the British Council, he began making notes for such a revision. His untimely death in 1973 came before he could finish the work, though most of the lexical material had been worked over and supplemented. The book now presented follows closely his publication of 1939 and is offered as a tribute to his linguistic achievement in describing so carefully the language of the people he worked among – a language that has continued to grow in use and influence and could well be a candidate for the national language of Zaïre.

J.F. Carrington